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ABSTRACT

"Framing the Future" is a major staff development initiative of the Australian National Training Authority. The initiative supports people in the vocational education and training (VET) sector who are involved in implementing the National Training Framework. "Framing the Future" encourages VET practitioners to take responsibility for their own learning to meet individual needs. Significant features of the staff development model are as follows: the adviser network, 42 work-based learning staff development projects, and network communications that connect advisers and participants in work-based learning projects, that are linked together but may be accessed separately. The model uses a number of learning strategies, such as work-based learning, technology-based learning, and sharing and reflection among groups of practitioners. The staff development model has a number of advantages: it is flexible, it is empowering, and it has the potential to be self-sustaining. External evaluation of "Framing the Future" shows that the initiative exceeded its goals and expectations in 1997. It has played an important role in the development of knowledge and skills of people involved in VET, and the initiative will be continued and expanded in 1998. (KC)

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Framing the Future

Overview

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Framing the Future

Overview

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Framing the Future is a major staff development initiative of the Australian National Training Authority.

The initiative supports people in the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector who are involved in implementing the National Training Framework.

This overview describes the Framing the Future initiative, explains the staff development model and briefly introduces its key features.

The external evaluation of Framing the Future shows that the initiative exceeded its goals and expectations in 1997. It has played an important role in the development of knowledge and skills of people involved in Vocational Education and Training. This has led to the decision to continue the initiative into 1998, expanding opportunities for additional VET staff to access a range of staff development activities.

Framing the Future

The introduction of the National Training Framework marks a significant evolution in the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector in Australia. It aims to make Vocational Education and Training more responsive to industry, more accessible and less bureaucratic.

The outcomes of reforms occurring as a result of successful implementation of the National Training Framework depend to a large degree on well informed VET practitioners.

The challenge for Framing the Future in 1997 was to develop a model of staff development which would:

- promote the use of workbased learning as a means of moving beyond awareness to practical application
- help VET staff to keep up to date with emerging changes within the VET system
- be demand driven, relevant, flexible, cost effective and timely.

Framing the Future

The Model

Framing the Future encourages VET practitioners to take responsibility for their own learning to meet individual needs. The approach facilitates access to information and skill development by providing the structure upon which individuals choose to build. It is just-in-time and just-for-me staff development.

Framing the Future has many features and can be characterised by the following:

- the adviser network
- Framing the Future projects
- Framing the Future network communications

which are linked together but may be accessed separately. These features recognise the diversity of needs, learning styles and learning choices of participants.

The model makes use of a number of learning strategies – workbased learning, technology based learning, and sharing and reflection

among groups of practitioners. The staff development is real and connects directly with the work staff are undertaking. It assists them in tackling real work problems and challenges with increased knowledge and understanding.

This staff development model has a number of advantages:

It is flexible.

People choose the level and scope of staff development they need. There are few constraints on how, when and where they learn.

It is empowering.

It moves beyond simply gathering facts about the new system, to the development and application of skills and knowledge as it affects them.

It has the potential to be self sustaining.

It assists in the development of a workplace learning culture.

Framing the Future

Features

'Armed with staff development methodologies, and with the benefit of the networks which Framing the Future has worked hard to create, individuals involved in the VET sector can do a lot to keep themselves up to date (and to help others keep up to date) with national developments.'

External Evaluator

The Adviser Network

The adviser network was established to create a nucleus of people with specific skills, experience, and the ability to influence change across organisations. This network drew together a wide range of expertise from practitioners across the national VET sector. Advisers included TAFE staff, industry trainers, private consultants or staff from other VET organisations. They used the resources of the network to develop and deliver information on the National Training Framework.

The opportunity to participate in the adviser network was advertised nationally. Using a demand driven approach, applicants were chosen against established selection criteria. The Framing the Future network communication strategy assisted in working within tight time frames by providing application details online.

The development of the Framing the Future adviser network began with a two day

workshop in each State and Territory, involving a total of 190 participants. The workshops held between July and September 1997, were designed to provide information on staff development strategies which would assist in implementing the National Training Framework. The workshops assisted participants to identify sources of up to date information about the emerging changes. Network members, as a group, were able to plan on-going activities. State and Territory Training Authority staff, involved in the implementation of the National Training Framework, addressed specific local issues.

Advisers have been able to decide on their level of participation in the network. Networks have continued with face to face meetings and have extended their group to include participants in the Framing the Future projects. Many advisers are also actively involved in Framing the Future projects as facilitators or as participants.

'While a number of people who attended the Framing the Future workshops would have been able to access most of the information provided, it helped considerably to have the Framing the Future team put all of this information together into an integrated whole.'

External Evaluation

Framing the Future

Projects

Framing the Future has provided limited matched funding for 42 workbased learning staff development projects. Almost 1,000 people have taken part in Framing the Future projects.

Project funding opportunities were advertised in June 1997. Selection was carried out against established criteria balanced by the need to achieve a equitable spread between States and Territories, provider categories and industry types.

Organisations contributed in excess of $900,000 to support Framing the Future projects, more than matching the $500,000 provided by Framing the Future, resulting in $1.4 million worth of staff development activity. Organisational contribution could be staff time, materials, venue hire as well as money.

Strategies such as action learning, mentoring, coaching, and project based learning are all forms of workbased learning

A project might involve a learning group which includes trainers in an organisation working together with teachers from their local TAFE Institute, to work out how they will use a new Training Package. The group, with their facilitator could choose to meet weekly, for two hours, over a period of ten weeks. They learn from each other and from resources identified by the group. These may include experts, publications and site visits. During the process they learn about the National Training Framework, the Australian Recognition Framework and Training Packages.

Participating in these projects develops a sense of ownership and can act as a catalyst for new ideas. Framing the Future projects have emphasised partnerships between enterprises, industry organisations and training providers. These partnerships have expanded the understanding of the participants and underline the need for cooperation across the VET sector to achieve the aims of the National Training Framework.

'Not only have projects enabled information about the National Training Framework and VET to reach a wider audience, but they have also resulted in a much better bridge between these national and inevitably somewhat generic initiatives, and local requirements.'

External Evaluator

Framing the Future Network Communication Strategy

Framing the Future is supported and underpinned by a network communication strategy linking participants across Australia. It connects advisers, participants in workbased learning projects, and helps anyone access information about Framing the Future and the National Training Framework.

A variety of communication approaches have been used to meet the needs of participants. Personal contact with the Framing the Future Team has been a key aspect of the communication strategy. As well as the initial adviser workshops, follow up workshops including both advisers and project participants, have been held in each State/Territory. The Framing the Future Team has attended many of the learning group meetings and has provided immediate support and advice by phone, fax, web and e-mail as, and when requested.

Framing the Future Information Updates complement ANTA publications such as Fast Facts and Australian Training, and assist in the rapid dissemination of new information. They have been distributed both by post and on the web site.

'I believe that the technology side of things, the Web site and online forums has set a benchmark for national project management.'

External Evaluator

The use of online technology for staff development is an innovative aspect of the strategy. The web site can be accessed from almost anywhere in Australia, at any time of the day or night, and can be used in a variety of ways. Because advisers and projects were selected against guidelines to a tight timeframe, it was particularly useful to have application details available to download from the web.

The Framing the Future web site has attracted a significant number of users from projects and the adviser network. It has also been recognised as a source of current VET information by many others who are not involved in the Framing the Future initiative.

The site has design features based on recent research. These include appropriate use of graphics, simple navigation and built in help for new users. It has evolved to suit the needs of users and is updated regularly to ensure information is current.

Help for new users accessing the web site, with support from the Framing the Future team has been an unexpected staff development outcome for the initiative. In many cases involvement Framing the Future has been the catalyst for participants to gain access to the web.

'One of the most innovative components of the Framing the Future program has been its focus on network communications, and particularly the Web, to help participants obtain and exchange information.'

External Evaluator

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